

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 139983

60

ORIGIN NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 R

66617

DRAFTED BY: S/S-O:P. SHANKLE

APPROVED BY: S/S-O:P.SHANKLE

----- 049917

O 151949Z JUN 75 ZFF4

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 139983

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 3929 SENT SECSTATE DATED JUN 14.

QUOTE

S E C R E T AMMAN 3929

NODIS

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, SY, JO, IS, PLO, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER RIFAI:

SAD VISIT

1. SUMMARY. RIFAI SAID ASAD'S VISIT WAS SUCCESSFUL AND THAT ASAD HAD BEEN FRANK AND OPEN WITH JORDANIANS. NO JOINT MILITARY COMMAND RESULTED AND THERE WAS REMARKABLY LITTLE SYRIAN PRESSURE FOR ONE. JORDAN'S MILITARY COOPERATION WITH SYRIA EXTENDS ONLY TO JOINT PLANNING IN THE EVENT THAT BOTH ARE ENGAGED IN HOSTILITIES. JORDAN WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP ITS FRONT WITH ISRAEL QUIET AND
SECRET

PAGE 02 STATE 139983

WILL AVOID AUTOMATICALLY INVOLVED IN ANY FUTURE CONFLICT HOWEVER IT MIGHT DEVELOP. RIFAI REVIEWED FOR ME SYRIAN VIEWS ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAQ (BAD AND NOT GETTING ANY BETTER), WITH THE PLO (GOOD AND SUPPORTIVE, BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF JORDAN'S INTERESTS), AND LEBANON (SYRIA SUPPORTS FRA GIE, WANTS

STABILITY, AND IS DEEPLY IRRITATED BY IRAQI AND LIBYAN MEDDLING). JORDAN IS PARTICIPATING IN NEW JOINT COMMISSION WITH SYRIA WHICH IS EVOLUTIONARY STEP IN IMPROVING RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES. SOME ECONOMIC COORDINATION RESULTED FROM THE VISIT INCLUDING SYRIAN APPROVAL OF YARMOUK WATER PROJECTS. ND SUMMARY.

2. AT RIFAI'S REQUEST I SAW HIM MORNING JUNE 14. HE WAS FOLLOWING UP WITH ME ON ANOTHER MATTER, BUT WE TALKED EXTENSIVELY ABOUT THE RESULTS OF THE ASAD VISIT.

3. ON THE QUESTION OF MILITARY COORDINATION, RIFAI INSISTED THAT ASAD HAD BEEN VERY COOPERATIVE. THE QUESTION OF A JOINT COMMAND HAD ONLY ARISEN ONCE DURING THE CONVERSATIONS. ASAD AT THAT TIME WAS TALKING OF AN EXPECTED IRAQ-IRAN-SAUDI ARABIA INITIATIVE TO FORM A JOINT DEFENSE PACT IN THE GULF AREA TO INCLUDE THE SMALLER STATES AS WELL. ASAD CLAIMED THIS WAS AN IRAQI INITIATIVE AND WHY DIDN'T JORDAN AND SYRIA ANNOUNCE A JOINT COMMAND OF THEIR OWN? ASAD WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT ONE OF THE

ELEMENTS OF THE IRAQI PROPOSAL FOR THE GULF INCLUDED THE EMPLOYMENT OF MILITARY AID FROM OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE EVENT OF INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES. ASAD SAW THIS AS A CONTINUATION OF AN IRAQI EFFORT TO UNDERMINE SMALLER STATES BY STIRRING UP TROUBLE AND THEN INTERVENING UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE JOINT DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT. CERTAINLY IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA WOULD NOT HAVE INTERNAL DIFFICULTIES. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THE DEFENSE ARRANGEMENTS ASAD CONCLUDED WOULD ALSO BE ORIENTED TOWARD SYRIA AND THEREFORE A SYRIAN AND JORDANIAN AGREEMENT WOULD BE A HELPFUL COUNTERWEIGHT AND A SUPPORT FOR THE SMALLER STATES IN THE GULF.

SECRET

PAGE 03 STATE 139983

4. RIFAI SAYS HE COUNTERED BY POINTING OUT THAT JORDAN WAS IN THE MIDST OF INTRICATE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND THE US TO FINANCE \$500M WORTH OF AIR DEFENSE EQUIPMENT. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF SUCH A COMMAND NOW WOULD NECESSITATE A COMPLETE REORIENTATION AND COULD ONLY RESULT IN UPSETTING THESE NEGOTIATIONS. RIFAI ADDED HE INSISTED THAT ASAD INDICATE AGAINST WHOM THE COMMAND WOULD BE DIRECTED. ASAD WAS VERY VAGUE AND RIFAI SAID THE MATTER WAS DRTPPED.

5. I PURSUED THIS SUBJECT FURTHER WITH RIFAI. (VENING BEFORE NEWSWEEK DE BORCHGRAVE HAD TOLD ME THAT LAST WEEK BEFORE ASAD VISIT HE HAD TALKED ABOUT VISIT WITH KING. AT THAT TIME KING HAD INDICATED THAT SYRIAN AIR DEFENSE IN SOUTH SYRIA WAS

COORDINATED TO COVER NORTH JORDAN. IN ADDITION, KING SAID HE EXPECTED TO BE PRESSED HEAVILY BY SYRIANS FOR A COMMITMENT TO A JOINT COMMAND AND THAT JORDAN WOULD ALSO HAVE TO CONTEND WITH SYRIAN PRESSURE TO BE AUTOMATICALLY INVOLVED IN A WAR SHOULD ONE BREAK OUT AGAINST THE ISRAELIS IN THE MIDDLE EAST. ON FRIDAY JUNE 14 AT LUNCH KING HAD BEEN MUCH MORE RETICENT IN TALKING WITH DE BORCHGRAVE ABOUT THESE ISSUES AND DE BORCHGRAVE HAD THE IMPRESSION THE KING FEARED HE WOULD PUBLISH THIS INFORMATION AND WAS THEREFORE BACKING AWAY FROM DISCUSSION.

6. RIFAI SAID THAT MILITARY COORDINATION WITH SYRIA HAD BEEN HAPHAZARD AND DISJOINTED. HE INSISTED THAT IT WAS ONLY ORIENTED TOWARD A DEFENSE AGAINST AN ISRAELI ATTACK. SYRIA HAD GIVEN ABSOLUTELY NO INDICATION THAT IT WANTED WAR, QUITE TO THE CONTRARY THEY SEEMED TO BE LOOKING TO THE US TO PRODUCE ANOTHER STEP ON THE GOLAN. AS A RESULT, WHAT THEY ARE NOW EMBARKING UPON ARE GENERAL DISCUSSION ABOUT HOW THE SYRIAN FIFTH ARMORED DIVISION WHICH IS STATIONED NORTH OF THE JORDANIAN BORDER COULD HELP AND SUPPORT THE JORDANIAN FIFTH ARMORED DIVISION WHICH HAS THE MISSION OF DEFENDING THE NORTHERN DEFENSES OF JORDAN. THESE DISCUSSIONS

HAD NOT SERIOUSLY BEEN PURSUED IN ANY DETAIL. NO SYRIAN FORCES
SECRET

PAGE 04 STATE 139983

WILL BE STATIONED IN JORDAN. IN ADDITION, THE JORDANIANS WOULD AVOID ANY COMMITMENT TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANY CONFLICT UNLESS ATTACKED. THIS PARTICULARLY RELATED TO A WAR IN WHICH SYRIA MIGHT BE THE BATTLEFIELD. UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES RIFAI INSISTED THAT JORDAN WOULD BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT BECOMING INVOLVED RECOGNIZING THAT THEY HAD A GREAT DEAL TO LOSE AND NOT VERY MUCH TO GAIN FROM RUSHING INTO BATTLE AGAINST THE ISRAELIS.

7. FURTHER, ASAD SEEMED TO HAVE DEVELOPED A HEALTHIER APPRECIATION OF THE MILITARY TERRAIN OF THE JORDAN VALLEY AND THE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT CHARACTERISTICS IT OFFERED FOR WAR FIGHTING. RIFAI SAID THAT ASAD, WHILE IN 1973 HE AND SADAT WERE ON THE PHONE EVERY FEW MINUTES ASKING FOR JORDANIAN HELP, NOW THAT HE HAS SEEN THE VALLEY HE KNOWS THAT ANYBODY WHO TRIES TO CROSS THE RIVER "WOULD GET NECK BROKEN." SIMILARLY, RIFAI SAID ASAD HAD DEVELOPED A HEALTHIER APPRECIATION OF THE STRENGTH OF JORDAN'S DEFENSIVE POSITION OF THE HEIGHTS OVERLOOKING THE VALLEY.

8. ON NEGOTIATIONS, ASAD, ACCORDING TO RIFAI, IS

RESIGNED TO EGYPT TAKING ANOTHER STEP ON THE SINAI. THERE IS NOTHING HE CAN DO TO PREVENT IT AND HE SEEMS REALISTICALLY PREPARED TO ACQUIESCE IN WHATEVER MIGHT DEVELOP IN THAT AREA. HE DEEPLY WANTS SOMETHING ON THE GOLAN. HE ARGUES STRONGLY AGAINST ACCEPTING A FEW KILOMETERS IN THE SOUTH. HE CLAIMS IT WOULD COST HIM MORE MONEY TO REORIENT HIS MILIARY DEFENSIVE POSITION THAN THE RETURN OF THE TERRITORY WOULD BE WORTH TO HIM. THE SYRIAN POSITION STILL IS THAT THE DISENGAGEMENT MUST TAKE PLACE ALL ALONG THE GOLAN TO A DEPTH TO BE NEGOTIATED.

9. SYRIANS COMMENTED AT LENGTH ON THEIR DISPUTE WITH IRAQ. RIFAI SAYS THE FEELING IS DEEP AND BITTER. SYRIANS CLAIM THEY HAVE ONLY TURNED ON THE CUPHRATES WATER FOR A MONTH. THE NEXT PROBLEM WILL ARISE WHEN THE OIL AGREEMENT WITH IRAQ RUNS OUT, RIFAI BELIEVES
SECRET

PAGE 05 STATE 139983

NEXT MONTH. SYRIANS BADLY NEED THE OIL AND WILL WANT TO NEGOTIATE A NEW AGREEMENT ALSO FOR DELIVERY OF OIL TO SYRIA FROM IRAQ AT CONCESSIONAL PRICES. RIFAI SAYS IT IS HARD TO SEE ANY END TO THIS DISPUTE IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE.

9. ON THE PALESTINIANS, ASAD WAS APPARENTLY OPEN AND FRANK WITH JORDANIANS. HE SAID HE HAD TOLD ARAFAT THAT HE WOULD STILL HAVE SYRIAN SUPPORT FOR A STATE IN THE WEST BANK, BUT ONLY IF ARAFAT WOULD TAKE A STRONG HAND WITH ALL OF THE PLO GROUPS AND PULL THEM INTO LINE. SYRIA COULD DO NOTHING FOR HIM IF THAT DID NOT HAPPEN. ASAD SAID HE HAS ALSO INSISTED THAT ANY FUTURE STATE IN THE WEST BANK WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE TO HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JORDAN. RIFAI SAID THAT ACCORDING TO ASAD, ARAFAT HAD VERY MUCH AGREED WITH THIS ASSESSMENT AND WAS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THAT REALITY. RIFAI FEELS THAT ASAD WAS HONEST AND FRANK WITH THEM ON THE PLO AND HIS SUPPORT FOR THE ORGANIZATION'S QUARREL WITH JORDAN AND KING HUSSEIN.

10. IN DISCUSSING LEBANON, ASAD AND KHADDAM MADE IT CLEAR THAT THEY WOULD BE VERY DISTURBED IF THE PRESENT NEAR STATE OF ANARCHY CONTINUES. THEY HOPE

FOR AN EARLY FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT BY KARAMI;

THEY STRONGLY SUPPORT PRESIDENT FRANGIE; BUT THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO ACCEPT A MILITARY GOVERNMENT OR EVEN A MILITARY COUP SHOULD BRING ABOUT SOME ORDER AND STABILITY OUT OF THE CHAOS. THEY ARE EMBITTERED ABOUT IRAQI AND LIBYAN MEDDLING. THEY CLAIM THAT NEITHER THE PALESTINIAN ORGANIZATION

NOR THE CHRISTIAN PARTIES ARE SIGNIFICANTLY AT FAULT FOR THE PRESENT UNSETTLED STATE OF AFFAIRS. IT IS THE OUTSIDERS WHO HAVE STIRRED IT UP. WHILE HERE, KHADDAM SUGGESTED IN RIFAI'S PRESENCE TO ASAD THAT HE GO BACK AGAIN TO LEBANON. ASAD INSISTED HE STAY AWAY IN ORDER NOT TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF ANY FURTHER SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE CONTROVERSY.

SECRET

PAGE 06 STATE 139983

11. I ASKED RIFAI WHAT KHADDAM WOULD BE BRINGING TO WASHINGTON. RIFAI REPLIED THAT HE WOULD PROBABLY FOLLOW PRETTY MUCH THE SAME LINE HE HAD HERE BUT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF INDICATING ACQUIESCENCE IN AN EGYPTIAN NEXT STEP WITH RIFAI SAID WAS HIS OWN CONCLUSION BASED ON WHAT SYRIANS HAD TO SAY RATHER THAN A FRANK ADMISSION ON THEIR PART.

12. I ASKED RIFAI WHAT WAS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JOINT HIGH COMMITTEE WHICH HAD DEVELOPED IN THE ASAD VISIT. HE SAID THAT IT HAS BEEN THE SYRIANS' DESIRE TO HAVE SOMETHING COME FROM THE VISIT. THERE ALREADY EXISTED SOME RATHER UNCOORDINATED COMMITTEES IN SUCH AREAS AS MILITARY COOPERATION, HEALTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TRANSPORTATION, ETC. AS A RESULT BOTH SIDES AGREED THAT THE CREATION OF A JOINT COMMISSION TO PULL TOGETHER THE ACTIVITIES OF ALL THESE BODIES WAS A GOOD IDEA AND COULD BE A USEFUL DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISIT. RIFAI ATTACHED THEREFORE NO UNUSUAL OR EXCEPTIONAL IMPORTANCE TO THIS STEP, RATHER PORTRAYING IT AS A NATURAL EVOLUTION OF THE IMPROVED JORDAN-SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP AND AS A OUTGROWTH OF THE NEED TO HAVE "SOMETHING" TO PUT FORWARD AS A RESULT OF THE TRIP.

13. RIFAI SAID MUCH OF THE ECONOMIC COORDINATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WOULD BE PURSUED IN SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE JOINT COMMISSION. HOWEVER SYRIANS HAD AGREED TO GO AHEAD WITH THE MAQARIN DAM AND HAD APPROVED US PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT.

ON THIS POINT THEY ACCEPTED THE FACT THAT IF SIGNIFICANT US FUNDING WERE INVOLVED, A US FIRM MIGHT BE ASKED TO UNDERTAKE THE CONSTRUCTION AND THIS WAS AGREEABLE TO THEM. FURTHER GIVEN SYRIA'S GOOD WATER AND ELECTRICAL POSITION, SYRIANS AGREED THAT ALL OF THE WATER STORED AND ELECTRICITY PRODUCED BY THE NEW DAM COULD BE USED BY JORDAN.

14. AS I WAS LEAVING RIFAI MENTIONED BRIEFLY HIS THEORY THAT RABIN'S EXTENDED CONVERSATIONS IN
SECRET

PAGE 07 STATE 139983

THE US WERE A HOPEFUL SIGN AND THE ISRAELI
RADIO SEEMED TO BE PLAYING IT THAT WAY. HE SAID
HE WANTED ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOU CAN FEEL FREE
TO USE ANY OF THE ABOVE INFORMATION ON THE SYRIAN
ATTITUDES IN YOUR TALKS WITH RABIN WHICH YOU THOUGHT
YOU FELT HELPFUL. HE CLEARLY WANTED YOU TO KNOW
THAT WHATEVER IS BEING SAID ABOUT MILITARY COMMANDS
AND JOINT COMMUNIQUE IN THE PRESS AND ELSEWHERE
HE HOPED THE ISRAELIS WOULD HAVE
HIS OWN ASSESSMENT IN ORDER TO AVOID AN EXAGGERATED
IMPRESSION OF WHAT HAD ACTUALLY HAPPEND.
PICKERING UNQUOTE SISCO

SECRET

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, MILITARY ASSISTANCE, FOREIGN RELATIONS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, CAT-C, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, MILITARY PLANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE139983
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: S/S-O.P. SHANKLE
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 XGDS-1
Errors: n/a
Film Number: N750001-0447
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t197506101/baaaamrv.tel
Line Count: 288
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: KelleyW0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 AUG 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <03 DEC 2003 by KelleyW0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: LOCK1
Status: NATIVE
Subject: n/a
TAGS: PFOR, SY, JO, IS, XF, US, PLO, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (RAFAI, ZAYD)
To: DAMASCUS
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006